

# CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

OF  
POPULAR

LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART

Fifth Series

ESTABLISHED BY WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS, 1832

No. 401.—VOL. VIII. SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 1891.

PRICE 1½d.

## THE BATHS OF THE CURSED.

BY CHARLES EDWARDS.

HAMMAM MESKOUTINE, or the 'Baths of the Cursed,' is a lovely little resort in the heart of Algeria, within easy reach of Algiers, Bône, or Constantine. It is rather too far from Algiers to be got at in a single day. But by travelling all day to Constantine and sleeping there, one may then take the five o'clock train in the morning, which reaches Meskoutine at half-past nine. Of course, too, Constantine itself is a city worth seeing. Few towns, if any, have such a romantic situation: hedged in on three of its sides by a perpendicular gorge hundreds of feet in depth, with a river in the bed of it; and with its houses perched on the sides of the precipices consecrated to the service of storks as well as human beings.

The journey from Constantine gives one a good idea of the better class of Algerian landed estate. Not the best, by any means. That may be seen in the extreme west, or in the neighbourhood of Bône or Algiers itself. There one is prone to believe the farmer's life is without any anxiety, and that he and his wife are like Adam and Eve in Paradise. But south and east of Constantine to Meskoutine, though the land is tolerably well cultivated, it has grave defects. The great plateaux of grain bounded by well-shaped hills are horribly malarious in summer. The population, too, must be considerably less than one to the square mile. For many minutes in succession, one steams through these green tracts and sees neither house nor sign of one. French colonists are sturdy fellows, but they are not of iron. In the earlier days of Algerian occupation, hundreds of thousands of these acres were taken up by Land Companies, who by means of judicious advertisements transplanted a multitude of peasants hither from France, bag and baggage. The usual results followed. Those that did not die after breaking the soil for the first time in the history of the land were discreet enough to

go elsewhere. Successors had thus to be found for them; and of the successors also a due or undue proportion came to an untimely end. The rare settlements of little white houses on the hill-sides each seem to have a cemetery with more graves in it than the size of the village appears to justify. You may, if you like, buy thousands of these acres for a trifle.

So on—through the barley-fields, and stony uplands, and occasional valleys with rich lush meadows in them, and herds of oxen huddled together under the shade of a few trees by the side of a water-brook; and barren wastes that would take the heart out of an agriculturist and offer him nothing in return. At length the barrenness gives place to a broken country, with pleasant wooded hills, and a considerable river by the side of the railway. Forests of olives and thickets of scrub gladden the eyes, and tell of the game which is here plentiful enough to make Meskoutine worth visiting for the gun's sake alone. And so, having passed through two or three defiles, we finally draw up in a more open country, with hills in the distance on all sides, and with green meadows and dark woods far and near over the plateau. It is preciously hot; but then, no wonder, for the very streams in the gullies are of warm water; and if you are near one or other of the many springs which here burst from the ground, they may be warm enough to scald you.

The writer, when he left the train at Meskoutine on a fine May morning, did so in company with two or three rich Arabs in gay apparel, and a family of Jews and Jewesses with enough gold about their persons to keep them for years. These were some of the clients of the Baths of the Cursed. By-and-by we saw one of the ladies in one of the baths, draped in a sheet, and there was a look of pain in her eyes. Here at the station, however, though it is a fashionable resort for Europeans as well as Africans, was none of the tumult of welcome with which porters and domestics assail the visitor at other 'Bath' cities. Two or three tawny individuals

loured against the palings of the little flower-garden of the station, but offered no aid to any one. Jews, Arabs, and Europeans were left to look after themselves as best they could.

It is a walk of but three or four minutes to the Bath establishment, and some of the various wonders of Meskoutine. Wonders? you ask. Why, yes; there's no doubt the word is applicable here. For, ere you have walked a quarter of a mile, you come face to face with a superb waterfall, *hot* waterfall, which makes you hold your breath from admiration and the plenitude of its steam. Yet it is not all of water. For the most part, it is rigid, like a thing of ice. It is, in fact, mainly a petrification. The calcareous deposit in the hot springs above has encrusted the rocks, so that they have the corrugated appearance and something of the colour of barley-sugar. Here and there, over and between the still masses, there is an ooze or trickle of warm water, adding to the work already done. Grass and flowers grow well by the sides of this nutritious waterfall; though the whitened soil in the neighbourhood does not seem adapted for vegetation of any kind.

You climb to the level of the top of the cascade, and then see, close by, a number of odd-looking cones and columns standing up from the blanched surface of the ground. The soil is hot to the hand, and you tread with an echo. The springs either were or still are under foot, making for the vents by the cascade. There they bubble up merrily with a temperature of more than two hundred degrees Fahrenheit. A litter of eggshells and fowls' feathers by the edge of them tells of the purpose they serve to the residents at Meskoutine. What is the use of lighting domestic fires when Nature offers her kitchen for human service night or day all the year round? And so here the dinner is cooked, and the clothes are washed in one or other of the little basins by which the springs eddy up to the daylight. Though the Arabs give the Baths so impolite a name, and tell various weird tales about them, they love them well. You see two or three of them, wrapped in their burnouses, lying, all white save their faces, near the foot of the cascade, fast asleep in the shade.

But the cones? Well, to borrow the figurative explanation of a French authority, they look like a procession of gigantic phantoms suddenly petrified. Some are six or seven feet in height, and some are fourteen or fifteen feet. They mark the site of ancient springs now subsided. At one time each of these cones was but the mere rim or lip of a basin in which the hot water bubbled as we see it at the top of the cascade. Thus the water continued to boil upwards in jets, like the geysers, for centuries, gradually—by the deposit of lime which fell from it—raising the height of its lip. Anon, the subterranean force which impelled it vertically weakened. The cone had attained its full stature. The springs one by one found other exits, and the cones themselves closed their orifices. Such is the matter-of-fact history of these eccentric rock-masses. The Arabs, however, have their own theory about the things. King Solomon, they say, here created baths for all the world, and put them in charge of a number of genii who were deaf, dumb, and blind. The cones are these

genii. And the worthy guardians, who still think King Solomon is alive, continue to keep the baths warm as they did at the first for the use of the king's subjects. It is supposed to be a matter of great difficulty to announce to these afflicted genii the fact that their master is dead. The inference is therefore that they will continue to warm the baths until the end of time.

There is also another tale which is less pleasant. A certain rich Arab had two children, a boy and a girl, both of remarkable beauty. These children loved each other with exceeding affection. When they grew up, their love remained unchanged, indeed increased until it became uncontrollable; and so they resolved to marry each other. The cadi of the tribe, after protest, agreed to sanction the marriage—they were so rich and so lovely a couple that it seemed to him and his neighbours that even Heaven itself would forgive such a crime in their case. The marriage day arrived. The concourse of visitors was immense. It was a calm bright morning, and all the auguries were hopeful. The preliminaries of the marriage were soon settled, and then feasting and dancing began. The married couple were about to withdraw to their tent, when suddenly a fearful tempest broke upon them; there was an earthquake; flames shot up in their midst; and boiling water rose into the air. When at length this diabolical storm and outbreak abated, nothing was left of the bride and bridegroom, the cadi and the guests, except these scores of cones. Like Lot's wife, they had all been transformed into stationary pillars from that time forward. The Arab imagination goes farther. It interprets the echo of your footfalls upon the hollow ground as an echo of the music of the marriage festival. The steam of the springs is that from the caldrons preparing the feast; and the white stones in the bubbling basins are the grains of the 'kouskous' itself. If you go among the cones at night, the scene revives—you see all the details of that awful marriage. But at the coming of dawn, the men and women all turn again into cones.

There is no luxury in the Bath Hotel of Meskoutine. That is against the principles of the place, which claims to be health-restoring, not through the medium of the kitchen, but by its air and its waters. You are informed that the 'cuisine' is of the 'bourgeois' type; and so it is. But the wine is good, and one may be sure of fruit here as early as in most places in the same latitude. The hotel is a spacious building occupying three sides of a square, the quadrangle in the midst being laid out in pleasant gardens and planted with orange trees, which in spring are massed with the sweetest bloom in the world. There is, further, a fountain in the centre of the quadrangle; and an aviary, in which canaries and parrots as well as divers of our English summer birds live together on fair terms of equality.

As the building is of but a single story, bedrooms as well as the living-rooms open immediately upon this garden plot. It is a primitive place, in which one is content for a time to dispense even with some of the *convenances*. Breakfast and dinner are of course the two chief events of the day for the person who is not out among the woods and mountains with his gun.

At the dinner-table, however, the company may be very good. Meskoutine has long been used by the military authorities as a station for invalids and convalescents. One may therefore find one's self among several agreeable and even distinguished officers who are here to recruit. But the idle life suits them for long as little as it suits a healthy Englishman; and one may be sure that they, too, will devote their hours to the chase just as soon as the doctor will let them.

Once upon a time, and not so very long ago, it was possible to shoot a lion in the neighbourhood of Meskoutine. Those halcyon days—if such they were for the Arab agriculturist—have passed away. A man must go many a mile over the hills to the south ere there is word of such royal game. The skins hanging about the walls of the hotel are of a less dignified kind: raccoons, panthers, and others. The sportsmen of the district are content with such prizes; and the hotel officials are very content if they can sell to the visitor one or other of these trivial pelts for but half the absurd price they presume to ask for them.

Winter is of course the best time for the Hammam. One can then appreciate to the full the warmth of the baths, when there is snow on the Djebel Debagh or the Djebel Mamora, north and west of the valley. In the days of the Romans this was a famous winter station. The fragments of their baths still remain, and the hotel gardens testify to the populousness of the place nearly two thousand years ago. There are a multitude of stone monuments and inscriptions set up among the orange trees to pique the fancy of archaeologists and antiquaries. The city of Tibilis itself, of which the Roman Meskoutine was only a dependency, lay some miles to the south; and its ruins are one of the excursions which the hotel has on its list as an undertaking by no means to be omitted either on foot or on a mule. Guides, however, are rather dear at Meskoutine, and transport-animals cost as much as ten or twelve francs a day.

One good feature about Meskoutine is the prevalence of high winds on the plateau. As a rule, in Algeria these winds are an intolerable nuisance. In Algiers or Constantine, for example, they are provocatives of ophthalmia, so galling is the dust which they whirl ceaselessly into one's face. But here, where the roads are few and rudimentary, and where one can always go across country, by pleasant meadows full of asphodels, or through olive woods with abundant shade from the sun, wind does not imply dust. At noon on a May day a register of one hundred degrees in the shade would be too much for active effort in a northerner, unless the blustering breeze from the hills tempered the heat, or at least tempered the effect of the heat upon one's energies. For my part, I found a walk of five or six miles at such a time easy and pleasurable; and the cave of the subterranean lake which was one of the objects of my walk, almost annoyingly cool as an interlude.

This cave, by the way, is another of the wonders of Meskoutine. It is hard to discover unaided, although it is little more than a mile from the hotel. As a cave it is not at all marvellous. It is a hole like other caves; but it has a supply of water in it which is reckoned quite

extraordinary. Previous to 1878, it was not in existence. But one wild July day in that year, during a storm the ground suddenly split with a great noise, and displayed it. Certain shepherds either saw or heard the operation of the phenomenon, which they of course at once viewed as the work of some malignant spirit. The next day, however, Europeans came upon the scene. They entered and saw a strong inrush of water, which continued until the present so-called 'lake' was formed. It is not warm water; but really clear and potable, which is the more remarkable because of the prevalence all around of the various hot springs of Meskoutine. The lake is about fifty yards long by thirty broad; though, without a boat, it is impossible to confirm these dimensions. As the slope from the mouth of the cave towards the water is abrupt and slippery with slime, one has to be careful in exploring. This is the more needful as the lake is some ninety feet or more in depth, although its clearness is terribly deceptive.

The adventurous visitor will regard this little cave and 'wonder' merely as a whet to his appetite for a much greater cavern, that of Thaya, a few miles nearer Constantine. Thaya is a cave in a thousand, and deserves to be mentioned in a breath with Adelsberg, which, however, beats it in size and conveniences of access. There is peril about Thaya, too—an additional recommendation in this tame age. It is not quite so perilous as Murray makes it. According to the guide-book, the descent to the 'bottom' chamber of it—only three-quarters of a mile from the entrance—is not less than a thousand feet. That would be a fearful gradient, especially with precipices of unfathomed depth upon one side of the track. Later measurements, however, disprove Mr Murray's record. Still, a descent of about five hundred feet—which is the approximate amount—is no small thing. Here, also, one finds that we have been anticipated by the Romans. There are scribbings and chisellings on the walls which show that the place was dedicated to the god Bacax, a divinity otherwise unknown to fame. In the bottom chamber, moreover, there is a big stone, which the fanciful are willing to regard as an altar upon which sacrifices of some kind were offered to this mysterious divinity. With the accessories, the scene of such a sacrifice might fitly be described by Mr Rider Haggard, but by no pen less potent. There is much exploration still to be done at Thaya, a fact which may tempt some of my readers. But it is work of the most arduous kind, apt to take more weight from a man than the most strenuous of Turkish baths. And one must always in such a case reckon with the possibility that one's Arab attendants may take alarm at something or other which tickles their superstitious faculty, and may bolt suddenly for the exit, leaving the poor European to guide himself back to daylight—a task that at Thaya might easily prove too much for him.

From November to May, Meskoutine is sure to please the visitor. At other times he will probably think it too warm; and much too warm for the offer of hot baths as a further incentive to him to stay a while. Of course for medicinal purposes it is useful all the year round. Like other bath stations, it claims to cure a vast

number of diseases. No doubt it does a great deal for skin maladies and rheumatic affections. The hotel authorities will entertain you for hours with descriptions of the uncommon cures it has achieved. There is certainly no lack of water for the purpose. The outflow is not less than forty thousand gallons per hour, which puts many places of renown quite beneath it. The temperature of its liquor is also extraordinary, being nearly ten times as hot as that of the Homburg baths, twice as hot as the waters of Aix-les-Bains, and about thirty per cent. hotter than those of Carlsbad.

Of course, however, it recommends itself to our notice less as a hydropathic establishment than as an agreeable temporary pleasure-resort. It may not be, as the manager thinks it, an ideal place for a honeymoon; but it is not a bad one. Panther-shooting is at any rate likely to be viewed as an enjoyable variation upon the theme of love-making.

### DUMARESQ'S DAUGHTER.

By GRANT ALLEN, AUTHOR OF 'IN ALL SHADES,'  
'THIS MORTAL COIL,' ETC.

#### CHAPTER XXXIX.—FORTUNE'S WHEEL.

At Algiers, meanwhile, things had been going from bad to worse with Psyche. Her sight grew daily dimmer and dimmer, and her general health feebler and feebler. Suspense was rapidly wearing her out. The shock, if it came, Sirena thought, would surely kill her.

And yet, at times, almost as if by magic, the poor broken girl recovered for many minutes together the use of her eyes as perfectly as ever. Of a sudden, as she stood or walked across the room, the misty blur that obscured her vision would now and again clear away with mysterious rapidity, and reveal as in an electric flash all the objects around with a vivid distinctness that fairly took her breath away. At such moments, things came out not only as bright and clear as of old, but with a startling brilliancy of colour and outline that she had never known in her normal condition. The dormant nerves, recalled to intermittent activity for a few brief seconds by some internal stimulus, seemed to concentrate on a single perceptive effort all the hoarded energy of a week's idleness.

It was on the day of Cyrus's arrival at Biskra that Psyche sat in the pretty little salon at the Villa des Orangers, with Sirena's hand entwined in her own, and her father watching her earnestly with those keen eyes of his from a seat on the central ottoman.

'No telegram from your brother yet to-day, Sirena,' she said with a sigh. 'How slow the days go! A week on Saturday!'

'The telegram will come soon, darling,' Sirena answered, smoothing her hair and pressing her hand gently. 'Would you like me to read to you—the end of that story?'

'What story?' Psyche asked, looking up vacantly with her sightless eyes in Sirena's direction.—'Oh yes; I remember. You were reading it this morning. No, dear; I don't even remember what it was about. I don't think I heard the words themselves at all; but the pleasant sound

of your voice in my ears seemed to soothe me and ease me.—You can't think, Sirena, what a comfort it is, when you don't see, to hear familiar voices humming around you; and yours is almost like a sister's voice to me now already. But I don't care even for reading this afternoon.—Where's papa? I thought he was here a minute ago.' And she turned her head round by pure force of habit, as if to look for him.

'Here I am, my child,' Haviland Dumaresq answered in a low voice. 'Don't you feel me quite close? I'm sitting by your side. I won't go away from you.'

'Don't,' Psyche said simply. 'I want you all now—as long as it lasts—everybody that loves me.—I didn't hear you, Papa. I suppose I shall learn in time—if I live—to listen and hear you. One can't accustom one's self all at once to being blind. It's so slow to learn. I turn my head still, and try to look, when I want to find any one. By-and-by, I daresay, I shall remember to listen for them.'

'But you're not going to be blind for ever, Psyche,' her father cried with the vehemence of despair. 'Not for ever, my child. They all say so. The doctors declare you'll get over it by-and-by. It's purely functional, they tell me: purely functional.'

'I don't know,' Psyche answered in a very slow but patient voice. 'It doesn't much matter. At times, I see again quite distinctly—oh, so distinctly; though not by an effort of will, as they said, at all. It seems to come to me quite by accident. But the odd thing is, after each time that I see so clearly once more—I fancy it all grows darker and dimmer and blacker than ever. The minutes of clearness seem like the last flickers of a fire before it goes out. My sight is ebbing away from me piecemeal.'

At that moment, there came a sharp knock at the door, and Antoine, the good-humoured Swiss waiter, entered briskly with a bundle of letters in his hand.

'The post,' he said, sorting them over hastily. 'Meester Vanrenen; mademoiselle, you will keep that for him against his return. M. Waldeck—Madame Smit—Mees Vilson—Mees Dumaresq.'

The father rose and tried in his haste to secure the letter; but before he could snatch it from Antoine's hands, Psyche, too, had risen and stepped boldly forward, with a firm tread which showed Sirena at once, in the twinkling of an eye, that a momentary interval of vivid sight had once more been vouchsafed her. 'Give it to me,' she cried, holding her hand out eagerly. 'I'll read it myself. I can see now. I'm not afraid. Whatever it may be, I'd rather read it.'

'Psyche,' her father exclaimed, laying his hand on her arm with a warning gesture: 'don't try your eyes, if they can see for a minute. Spare them, my darling. Let me read it first, or give it to Sirena. Besides, I'm afraid of what it may contain for you. Let me look at it, there's a good girl. I'll see what it is for you.'

But Psyche answered 'No,' with perfect firmness, claspings it hard in her small hand. 'I can read now, and I'd rather read. Besides, it's nothing. It isn't from Biskra. It's only from home. It has an English stamp on it.' And she looked at the envelope with almost the uncon-



cerned manner of the old days, when to see and to read was a matter of course with her.

The envelope bore an embossed seal on the gummed flap: 'Burchell and Dobbs, Solicitors, Chancery Lane, London.' So much Sirena took in at a glance, as she looked askance at the letter curiously in her friend's hand.

Psyche broke the seal with trembling fingers: not that the letter could matter much to her now; but everything in these days seemed so fraught with latent and unspeakable terrors. She never knew what a day might bring forth in the present crisis.

As she gazed at it, the first words that met her eyes almost drove her blind again with horror and astonishment. What on earth could they mean? What on earth could they portend? For the letter was headed with lawyer-like precision, 'In the matter of C. A. Linnell, deceased. Probate granted.'

"In the matter of C. A. Linnell, deceased!" Linnell, deceased! Linnell, deceased! Oh, horrible! horrible! Psyche laid down the letter for a moment, still clutched as by iron in her two white hands, but folded on her lap as though she could not even bear to look at it. Then he was dead, dead, really dead at last! The law itself had declared all hope was over. In the matter of C. A. Linnell, deceased! Probate granted! Probate granted!

How it rang in her ears! How it whirled through her brain! How it pictured itself visibly on her wearied eyeballs! She raised her eyes mechanically to the white-washed ceiling. In letters of blood, half a yard long, she saw it written there: 'In the matter of C. A. Linnell, deceased.' It was printed as in marble on the very fabric of her failing retina.

She turned away in her horror, and looked down at the floor. On the yellow Persian rug she saw it there still, a negative image in dark running script-hand. It came out deep purple. It would follow her to the grave, she firmly believed. Linnell, deceased! Linnell, deceased! No power on earth could remove it now from her burning eyeballs.

She closed her eyes; but it floated there still, a visible line of fire amid the thick darkness. 'In the matter of C. A. Linnell, deceased.' Dead! Dead! Dead! So he was dead indeed. The letter pursued her. It crushed her. It haunted her.

She took up the fatal missive once more and tried to read it through; but she couldn't, she couldn't. Her eyesight was failing her again now. Those deadly words blurred and distorted the rest of the paper. She saw the whole as a transparency through those awful lines. Her strength gave way. She closed her eyes and cried. 'Read it to me, Sirena; she sobbed aloud, letting it drop; and Sirena read it.

It was a long and formal statement by Linnell's solicitor of the disposition made of the deceased's property. Sirena hesitated whether she should read every word, in all its naked official bluntness, with its professional absence of emotion or feeling; but each time that she paused or faltered, Psyche laid a cold white hand on her wrist once more and murmured resolutely: 'Go on. I can bear it. I want to hear all. It's better I should know.' And Sirena read on, to the uttermost syllable.

'Our late client,' the lawyer's letter remarked, with legal periphrasis, had made a will before leaving England (copy of which was herewith annexed), whereby he devised the bulk of his real and personal estate to his sole legatee, Psyche, daughter of Haviland Dumaresq, Esquire, of the Wren's Nest, Petherton Episcopi, in the county of Dorset, as a testimony to the profound respect he felt for her father's distinguished literary and philosophical ability. Their late client, it appeared, had gone to Khartoum, and there in all probability been killed in the general massacre of European defenders after the Mahdi's troops entered the city. Absolute legal proof of death being in this case difficult or indeed impossible, the firm had waited for a full year before attempting to take out probate. That was a longer time than had been allowed to elapse with regard to the estate of any other of the Khartoum victims. The late Mr C. A. Linnell, however, had particularly arranged with their firm that in case of serious ground for apprehension arising, a reasonable period should be permitted to intervene before definite action was taken in the matter. Under these circumstances, they had waited long; but probate had now at last been granted to the executor named therein; and it was the firm's duty, as solicitors to that executor, to announce to Miss Dumaresq that the property devised was henceforward hers, and hers only. With reference, however, to the Linnell estates at large—that was to say, the estate of the late Sir Austen Linnell, Baronet, deceased at the same time with his cousin at Khartoum—it was their duty to inform her that a serious question might hereafter arise as to whether it had ever passed at all into Mr C. A. Linnell's possession. If Mr C. A. Linnell, the testator, predeceased his cousin, the late baronet, then and in that case—

But there Psyche, brave and resolute as she was, could stand it no longer. She clasped her hands tight on her lap and burst into tears. She could never inherit her dead lover's fortune. She had murdered him! She had murdered him! She had sent him to his death. And now she knew how much he had loved her. In the very moment of that first great disappointment, he had thought of her and loved her.

As for Haviland Dumaresq, bowed and bent with grief, he sat there still, listening and wondering over this strange news, with a horrible turmoil of conflicting emotions, and forming already in his whirling brain fresh plans and day-dreams for poor heart-broken Psyche. 'Give me the will,' he cried, turning quickly to Sirena. The girl handed him the attested copy. Haviland Dumaresq buried himself at once in that and the letter, while Sirena turned to lay poor sobbing Psyche's weary little head on her comforting shoulder.

The old man read and re-read for some minutes in silence. Then he looked up amazed, and cried aloud in a voice full almost of awe and reverence: 'Then Linnell had a fortune of something like seven thousand a year, it seems, Psyche.'

'Papa!' Psyche exclaimed, rising up before him in ineffable horror. 'If you say another word about that unspeakable Thing, you will kill me, you will kill me!'

Haviland Dumaresq turned back with a reeling brain to those astonishing figures. The mad mood of greed was upon him once more: the un-

natural mood brought about by those long years of continuous opium-eating. What a fool he had been; and how dearly he had paid for it! To turn away a man with seven thousand a year—a man that Psyche loved, a man who loved Psyche! But all had come out well in the end for all that. The man had done as he ought to have done—made a just will in Psyche's favour; and Psyche, who loved him, would now inherit everything. He was not without remorse, of course, for his own part in the drama. It would have been better, no doubt, in some ways better, if only the young fellow could have married Psyche, instead of dying and leaving her his fortune. The iron had sunk deep into Psyche's soul: she had suffered much: it would be long before those scars could heal over entirely. But they would heal in time; they would heal in time: all human emotions weaken in effect with each mental repetition. And Psyche would now own the fortune herself. She would own it herself, and marry whom she liked. For in time, without a doubt, she would be wise and marry.

Not Cyrus Vanrenen. Not that empty young man. No, indeed: he was never good enough for Psyche. In a period of trouble, and under special conditions of fear for the future, Haviland Dumaresq had been willing for a moment to admit that vague and unsatisfactory young American—vulgar, vulgar, and bad tone too, though undoubtedly good-hearted—to the high privilege of paying court to Psyche. But now that Psyche's future was otherwise secured—now that the load was lifted from his soul—now that all was coming straight by an unwonted miracle—he had other ambitions, other schemes for his Psyche. No American for her—an heiress in her own right, and Dumaresq's daughter. She could command whom she would—she could choose her own fate—she was rich, rich, rich—and Dumaresq's daughter.

Her eyes, he felt confident, would get well by-and-by. This fit of disappointed love was sharp and critical, to be sure; but she had youth on her side: at her age, one can outlive and outgrow anything.

Except, perhaps, a broken heart; and Haviland Dumaresq did not even yet understand that Psyche's heart was really broken.

#### BUR-FRUIITS AND HOOKED SEEDS.

ALL the higher plants are fixed throughout their life to one spot; they have no power to move from place to place, and would be incapable of spreading over the earth to any great extent unless they could avail themselves of some natural agency for the transport of their seeds. Hence arises the necessity for those beautiful and varied contrivances observed throughout the vegetable kingdom for promoting the dispersion of seeds. The natural agencies at disposal for this purpose are not very numerous. A number of seed-capsules are more or less elastic, and when ripe, suddenly explode, discharging their seeds with considerable force. The seeds of the broom and the violet are scattered in this way. Berries and stone-fruits like the cherry have their seeds dispersed by birds. Attracted by the bright colour of the fruit, a bird devours the

soft sweet pulp, and after conveying the hard seeds some distance, lets them fall to the earth. Water-lilies and some other aquatic plants have seeds provided with air-cavities or floats, and are disseminated by water-currents. The bulk of terrestrial plants, however, depend on the wind for dissemination. The lightness and small size of most seeds favour their wide distribution by this means. Special provisions facilitating wind-dispersion occur in many cases; the seed, or the fruit itself where this contains but one seed, is frequently provided with membranous expansions or wings, as in the pine, maple, and ash; or with a tuft of hairs, as in the willow, poplar, thistle, and dandelion.

Of all natural agencies, the wind is undoubtedly by far the most efficient in scattering vegetable seeds; but it is not necessarily in all cases the most economical. For one thing, a large proportion of wind-blown seeds must fall into the sea and perish, as salt water quickly destroys their power of germination. Only a small proportion can possibly alight in places suitable for their development. The objections to this mode of dispersion become very great where the seeds require to be delivered in particular stations corresponding to the habitat of the species. In a large number of plants this difficulty has been met by the seeds acquiring the power of attaching themselves to the skins of four-footed animals, whose movements and migrations are thus utilised for the dispersion of the seeds. The expression, more forcible than elegant, 'to stick like a bur,' refers to the well-known adhesive property of the flower-heads of the burdock—a property shared by many other plants.

A roughened surface alone may be sufficient in the case of small seeds to cause them to adhere to fur or wool. Every one has noticed how readily hayseeds cling to clothes or hair. The tubercles, reticulations, wrinkles, and furrows observed on the surface of many small seeds may be of use in this way. In the chickweed, campion, and other members of the Stitchwort family, the seed is studded over with minute projections; while rough or rugose seeds are of common occurrence in other families.

More marked examples of adaptation to transport by animal agency are seen in those fruits and seeds furnished with prickles, hooks, or prongs. These appendages by which the seed fastens itself to the coat of an animal assume various forms suggestive of combs, hairpins, skewers, barbed arrows, fish-hooks, tridents, anchor-flukes, harpoons, and grappling-irons. Organs of this description are so obviously adapted to become entangled in wool, fur, or hair, that there can be no doubt as to their use. Seeds are constantly imported with foreign hides; and on the banks of streams where wool is washed strange plants are observed from time to time to have established themselves.

Under the term 'fruit' botanists include all seed-vessels, whether succulent or not; thus, a dry seed-capsule like that of the poppy, the pod of a pea, a hazel nut, and a grain of wheat, are all fruits in the botanical sense. Capsules which contain numerous seeds usually split open when ripe, to admit of the discharge and distribution of the seeds within. The capsule remains attached to the mother-plant; but the

seeds are loosened, and break away by their own weight. One-seeded fruits, on the other hand, seldom open; and when ripe, separate from the parent plant. Such dry, one-seeded fruits are known as achenes. Hooked appendages are much more frequent on achenes than on seeds, for the very obvious reason that hooks on seeds contained within a capsular fruit have very little chance of coming in contact with any animal. At maturity, an achene which is adapted for wind-dispersion generally severs its connection with the stalk, and either falls to the ground or is borne away on the breeze. Hooked achenes are not quite so easily detached. Even when ripe, they do not spontaneously fall to the earth; neither is the force of the wind sufficient to remove them. Most ordinary plants shed their seeds or cast their ripe fruits; but where hooked appendages occur, the fruit requires to be plucked, the services of an animal being necessary for its removal. Some little force is needed even if the achene be perfectly ripe—just such force as might be exerted by a passing animal in whose hair the hook had caught. The fruits and seeds of trees, as pointed out by Lubbock, are seldom if ever provided with hooklets—a circumstance explained by the fact that there are no animals sufficiently tall to reach up to them. The absence of hooklets from the fruits of very diminutive species has also been remarked. The height of the plant in the latter case is insufficient to bring the fruit into contact with any animal likely to prove an effectual agent in dispersion.

To both these rules there may of course be exceptions. Hooked seeds on a low-growing plant or dropped from a lofty tree would always have an occasional chance of attaching themselves to animals lying down or rolling about on the ground; they might also be dispersed by some of the smaller rodents. The smallest plant in the British flora bearing adhesive fruits is the forget-me-not; all the others have a pretty uniform height, varying from two to four feet, from which we may gather that the adaptation has reference to animals of some considerable size, such as sheep and goats.

With one or two exceptions, the plants indigenous to Britain which have adhesive fruits are of common occurrence. A familiar garden weed, one of the Forget-me-nots (*Myosotis arvensis*), has the calyx which encloses the fruit beset with numerous stiff hooklets, which readily fix themselves to one's clothes. Hound's-tongue (*Cynoglossum*), another plant belonging to the same order as forget-me-not, has its fruits covered with hooked bristles; as has also the Enchanter's-nightshade (*Circæa*), one of the Fuchsia family, not uncommon in damp woods. A still better example is the bur-fruit of *Galium aparine*, the common Bedstraw, sometimes called, on account of its peculiar climbing habit, Robin-run-the-hedge. The entire surface of the plant is hispid; the hooked hairs on the stem assist the bedstraw in climbing, while those on the fruit serve for dispersion. Each longitudinal ridge on the fruit of the Carrot (*Daucus*) is surmounted by a comb-like row of curved spines. The Bur-parsley (*Caucalis*) and the Hedge-parsley (*Torilis*) also have their little fruits bristling like a hedgehog with spines more or less hooked at their tips.

Very frequently there is but one hook on each seed or achene, as in the Avena (*Geum*), where the persistent style forms a terminal hook. A well-developed specimen of this fruit presents a striking resemblance to a grapnel.

One of the best plants on which to study these contrivances is the common agrimony. It has an erect, unbranched, rod-like stem, on which at intervals apart are set the little pear-shaped fruits. Each fruit is crowned with several circlets of hooked hairs, and is at first upright or horizontal; but when quite ripe, becomes inverted by the bending or twisting of its very short pedicel or stalk. The bristles at the same time spread out, exposing their points. The object of these changes is evidently to promote the removal of the ripe fruit by passing animals. A branch can be broken from a tree much more easily by pulling it away from the stem than by pressing it towards the stem. In its original position, the fruit of agrimony, when its hooklets caught hold, say, of a passing sheep, would be pressed towards the stem; but in the inverted position it is pulled in a direction away from the stem, and is therefore more easily removed. At the same time, the hooklets will be more deeply involved in the sheep's fleece. The Enchanter's-nightshade inverts its ripe fruits in the same way.

Two perfectly distinct modes of dispersion are provided for in the Burdock (*Arctium*), which may therefore be said to have two strings to its bow. The plant belongs to the order Compositæ, its small flowers being produced in compact heads or capitula, which are surrounded by overlapping scales or bracts. Each bract forming the involucre terminates in a strong hook; the flower-heads are therefore adapted to be dispersed by animals. But in addition to this, each little fruit within the involucre is furnished with a pappus or tuft of hairs, fitting it for distribution by the wind. Supposing the capitula or burs of *Arctium* dispersed by animals, each flower-head then becomes a new centre of dispersion from which the individual fruits are scattered by the wind. Such a double distribution must be more efficient than dispersion from a single centre.

The flower-heads of the Fuller's teasel, formerly used for raising the nap of cloth, have hooked bracts not unlike those of *Arctium*. The spiny bracts surrounding the heads of some of the thistles possibly serve a similar purpose; but these are not easily detached from the flower-stalk. As thistles wither, however, their stems become dry and brittle; there may, therefore, be no necessity for detaching the capitula if portions of the plant readily come away with them. The bracts composing the involucre of the Knapweed (*Centaurea*) have beautifully pectinated margins, and it is difficult to suggest any other use for these than that they may serve to attach the flower-heads to wool or fur.

Many grass-seeds have the adhesive character in a high degree, caused by a rough surface, ciliated glumes, or a serrated awn. The awn or bristle attached to the barley grain appears to act as a skewer for fastening the seed to the covering of an animal. Bearded or aristate grains have a remarkable penetrating power, approaching in this respect the burrowing seeds of the stork's-bill. A grain of barley having its bristle

attached, placed in one's sleeve, soon works its way up to the shoulder; and it is easy to see how an animal's movements would cause a seed like this to become firmly embedded in its hair or wool.

Long cultivation has probably so greatly altered our cereals that very little can with safety be inferred from their present condition. They are not now found in the wild state, a circumstance which Hildebrand ascribes to their having lost through cultivation their means of dispersion, whereby they are no longer able to hold their own against natural species. The meadow and canary grasses are adapted for wind-dispersion, as also *Phragmites*, *Pennisetum*, and several others; but the grasses in general may be considered to have their seeds adapted for dispersion by means of animals. This, moreover, is only what we might expect, when we consider the vast herds of buffaloes, deer, antelopes, and other large graminivorous animals that still inhabit the grassy plains of Africa, and formerly roamed on the American prairies and Asiatic steppes. Nature is economical of her means, and it is reasonable to suppose that as an animal became dependent on a certain class of plants for food, it should be utilised as an agent in their dispersion. Such, in a state of nature, is apparently the relation subsisting between the grasses and some of the larger ruminants.

These mutual accommodations form a pleasing contrast to the arrangements in the Grapple plant, *Harpagophytum*. Even of the vegetable kingdom it is sometimes true that Nature is 'red in tooth and claw.' The fruit of *H. procumbens* has upwards of a dozen stout flattened spines projecting an inch or two from its surface. Each spine terminates in a grapple-like arrangement of strong recurved hooks; while its sharp edges are also furnished with hooked processes of similar character. These sharp spines will cut the strongest leather. This formidable fruit is accredited with causing the death of the lion. Should one adhere to its skin and the lion attempt to disengage it, the fruit is almost certain to be transferred to the lion's mouth. The wounds there inflicted by the sharp spines drive the animal frantic; but every effort to get rid of the encumbrance is vain, and only results in the infliction of fresh wounds, until ultimately the animal succumbs to the torture. Dr Livingstone states that if this fruit happens to lay hold of the mouth of an ox, the animal stands and roars with pain and a sense of helplessness. The same traveller also mentions a fruit which lies flat like a shilling with two thorns in its centre, ready to run into the foot of any animal that treads upon it and stick there for days together.

Another curious example of these forbidden or rather forbidding fruits is *Martynia proboscidea*. This fruit, about three inches long, and resembling a pea-pod, terminates in two slender curved prongs, exceeding the fruit itself in length. The writer has seen a specimen of a fruit, said to have been obtained from imported wool, very similar to this, but much larger, the prongs being six or eight inches long. In some parts of the country these fruits are preserved as household curiosities, and locally known as the 'Devil's horns.' The West Indian snake-fang seed, shaped like an almond, but larger, is pro-

vided with two short recurved hooks at one end. A plant of the Mallow order, *Pavonia spinifex*, has three diverging prongs attached to each nutlet, beset with backward-pointing barbs. *Acena procumbens* has several slender spines barbed at their extremities like an arrow. The seed of *Villarsia*, an aquatic genus, is fringed with ciliated processes. Hooked seeds are characteristic of a small Australian order allied to the milk-wort; while the *Triumphettas* are tropical weeds with bur-fruits like those of the bedstraw.

Hooked appendages might prove a disadvantage rather than a benefit if there was any possibility of the achene becoming detached before it was ripe. Hence the fruit is firmly attached to the mother-plant, and only at maturity is the connection so weakened as to admit of easy separation. The sharp points of the hooks, as we have seen, are seldom exposed until the fruit is perfectly ripe. The unripened fruits of *Galium*, *Geum*, &c. have little or no adhesive power. In *Geum* and *Agrimonia* the fruit is at first vertical, and its hooks are concealed; but when ripe, its position is inverted, and the hooklets spread out exposing their points. The umbel of the carrot, while the seed is maturing, has its rays gathered closely together, forming a ball, and the hooks are not exposed till the seeds are ripe.

A close examination of the hooklets in *Torilis*, *Myosotis*, *Geum*, *Agrimonia*, &c., shows that even the point of the hook itself is not properly formed till the very last moment. As these slender projections dry they not only curve and spread, but a slight torsion also takes place. On account of this twisting, the curve of the hook ceases to be circular and becomes slightly spiral; its curvature is not all in one plane, but, like a fish-hook, the point is turned a little to one side. By this torsion of the spines their points become fully exposed, and this explains how these appendages so suddenly acquire the property of taking hold of one's clothes when the seeds are ripe. As they shrivel, the hooklets tighten their grasp, but through time become brittle; and should the animal rub against a tree or clean itself, are not difficult to dislodge.

Bur-fruits are seldom clustered like berries; the internodes of the stem in forget-me-not and agrimony elongate after flowering, whereby the burs are separated from each other, so that it is hardly possible for one animal to tear them all away at once. This isolation of the fruits secures for them a more gradual and widespread distribution; and the plant avoids the risk of putting all its eggs in one basket.

Certain plants have sticky seeds which gum themselves to the hairs of animals. Of this class we have no good examples among our native species. The mistletoe has a sticky seed, but, as its fruit is a berry dispersed by birds, it cannot be included 'amongst rude burs and thistles.' The seeds of *Linum* and *Polemonium* become glutinous when moistened, but it is uncertain whether this peculiarity aids in dissemination or not; the same may be said of the glandular hairs of *Plumbago* and *Linnæa borealis*. A viscid secretion is better adapted than a hook for adhering to a smooth surface; and it is quite possible that some of the viscid class may be dispersed by reptiles and other hairless creatures. The number of plants in which this provision exists is small, and they



do not properly belong to our subject, which has to do not with the agency of animals in dispersion generally, so much as with those curious organs of attachment to which reference is made in the title of this paper.

## A NOBLE REVENGE.

By JESSIE MACLEOD.

IN FOUR PARTS.

### PART I.—SUNKEN ROCKS.

'Who are these new arrivals, I wonder? Friends of my husband, I suppose, for I do not recognise them,' said Lady Adair, who with several visitors was enjoying the morning sunshine on a high-terraced walk in her flower-garden, overlooking the carriage drive, up which a vehicle was approaching.

'It is a hired chaise from the station at Mochram,' observed Mrs King; 'and as there is no luggage, they have evidently not come to stay.'

'Hardly, or I should have had intimation,' replied Lady Adair. 'I am sorry Sir Hugh has gone with the shooting-party. Perhaps they have business with him. I must return to the house and ascertain.'

'If I may make a remark,' said a very young lady, whose observation and eyes were keen, 'I should hardly take these visitors for gentlemen—two of them, at anyrate. Fancy chimney-pot hats and blue ties! Besides, there is something—something'—She stopped, as it occurred to her that such remarks were not well-bred.

'It is impossible to judge who are gentlemen and who are not, by their dress, for appearance does not count in these days. Wait until you hear them talk,' said Lady Adair.

'One of them was not unlike the chief clerk at the bank; but not having seen him many times, I cannot say for certain. If it is he, I fear there must be something the matter at home,' observed Mrs Gravenor, a sweet-looking young woman, in a tone of anxiety. She always spoke of her family as 'home,' for Captain Gravenor had not yet set up his Lares and Penates, but moved about with his regiment.

'I will go and see,' said Lady Adair, descending the steps.

A footman met her. 'Three gentlemen on business to Captain Gravenor, my lady. They are in the morning-room.'

She hastened to the house, entering an apartment opening from the entrance hall, one set aside for chance visitors, and where Sir Hugh transacted affairs connected with his estate.

'I regret that Captain Gravenor has accompanied a shooting-party to the moors; he will scarcely be back before sunset. I trust your business is not very urgent?' said she, scanning successively the faces of the three strangers, not knowing whom to address as the principal.

'My name is Parish. I am in the bank of Desborough & Co., of Nicholas Lane. I have accompanied these gentlemen from London, who particularly wish to see Captain Gravenor,' replied the eldest of the three, indicating his companions with a wave of the hand.

'I suppose we can drive after them?' said one of the men, taking up his hat, as if about to depart.

'You evidently are unacquainted with Scotland. You might possibly overtake the party by riding; but to drive you cannot; there are no roads,' remarked the lady.

'What is to be done?' said the other to his companion. They looked at each other non-plussed.

'Mrs Gravenor is here; perhaps you might like to see her?'

'By no means, ma'am. It is no business that she can transact,' said the spokesman, with a grim smile.

Lady Adair, without knowing wherefore, felt a vague uneasiness. The reticence, the total absence of ceremony in these strangers, set her wondering. What was she to do with them? They had driven ten miles from Mochram, a little so-called town, that had sprung up around the nearest station on a loop-line from Stirling.

'If the affair is urgent,' said she, 'you can have a pony from the stables for one gentleman, and a groom to accompany him. Perhaps the others can find amusement in the meantime in visiting the grounds, and with newspapers.—Will you allow me to offer you some luncheon?'

This proposal was accepted with thanks.

'The fact is, ma'am,' said Mr Parish, 'our business is not a pleasant one, to say the best of it. Mrs Gravenor may be best kept in the dark.'

'I am sorry,' said Lady Adair, turning pale. 'I hope there is no illness—no death?'

'No, ma'am, nothing of that kind; but as bad in another way.'

It must be money, thought the lady, for she knew that, previous to his marriage, Captain Gravenor had lived fast. She consigned the strangers to the care of the butler, who provided a hospitable luncheon, to which they did ample justice, after their drive in the mountain air. Then the leader of the party was mounted on a strong pony, and, accompanied by a groom, set out for the moor where the sportsmen might presumably be found; and the chaise was put up in the stable.

'You were right, Lena; it is Mr Parish from your father's bank; but there is nobody ill in your family; he merely wishes to see Captain Gravenor on business,' said Lady Adair, wishing to reassure the young wife.

'What a strange thing! And we have not yet left London a week. I do not think Papa can have sent any money, for he made George a handsome present recently,' said Mrs Gravenor, who made no secret of being poor—for she *was* poor, although a banker's daughter. Money is seldom plentiful in a banker's house; it is no unusual thing for his home to be a penurious one; and in this case, although Lena Desborough would have money, it could not be until her father's death—she had no marriage dowry.

Keeping his money-bags so closely tied, sons-in-law did not appear. When Captain Gravenor asked for Helena, or Lena, as she was familiarly called, the youngest of his three daughters, upon whom all the beauty and amiability of the family were concentrated, he was refused by the old gentleman, for it was well known that he had carelessly run through whatever property he had possessed. She, seeing the lives of her sisters soured by disappointments, weary of their sharp tongues and jealous tempers, took her fate in her

own hands, and quietly married Captain Gravenor one morning at All Souls' Church, when she was supposed to be reading in Park Square Gardens. She was a mild gentle girl; this was the only time in her life she had ever acted on her own responsibility. These young people were wrong; and, like most deviations from the straightforward path, punishment followed it. At first, Mr Desborough was enraged; but as he loved his youngest child the most, he soon thought better of the matter, for Captain Gravenor was a gentleman, the last survivor of a good family. What was more, he had married Lena without settlements; therefore, the banker held future arrangements in his own hands. At last he consented to receive his son-in-law, and they became, if not on a cordial, at least on a friendly footing with one another. He gave no settled income to Lena, but sent cheques occasionally. People said that the Captain had married her hoping for a fortune. They were wrong; he married her because she was sweet enough to be valued for herself alone.

In the meantime the young officer, unconscious of the unpleasant news coming to overtake him, was the gayest of a rather large party of sportsmen. He was a tall, fair, handsome man of seven-and-twenty; a general favourite. Genial, thoughtless, fond of pleasure, he had made ducks and drakes of his inheritance, but nothing worse. Honourable at heart, he had almost paid his liabilities up to the last penny. This left him poor, but with a character unsullied.

'Do not laugh so immoderately, Gravenor,' said Sir Hugh. 'The old wives say, "They that laugh in the morning will greet ere'en."'

'You think me "fey"?'

'Not so bad as that—only, it's not lucky.'

'Put it down to your exhilarating mountain air. Ozone is as intoxicating as whisky. As for your Scotch proverb, I can cap that with the English one of "Laugh and grow fat." Don't you know that there is a certain valve in the heart that only opens with laughter?'

'Well,' said Sir Hugh, gazing at the open, handsome face and bright blue eyes of his young guest with a certain admiration, 'I suppose it is natural that you, with a charming young wife, and a military promising career before you, should be gay. Old fogies like me have cares as we advance in life; while you—'

'Have not a care in the world—that is, nothing to be called by so serious a name. A little more money would be desirable; but I am perfectly happy without it.'

Bang, bang! An unerring marksman, he had not missed a bird that morning.

'Your hand is well in. As for the grouse'—Sir Hugh interrupted himself. 'Who are these coming after us? Some one I do not know on Kelpie, and Campbell on Priuce. Well, the more the merrier.'

He concerned himself no more about the matter, continuing to follow the beaters, leaving the new-comers to overtake the party, which at last they did. Then Sir Hugh saw a stranger.

Gentleman from London, Sir Hugh, come after Captain Gravenor on business,' said Campbell.

'Nothing serious, I hope?' said the Baronet, advancing.

'It may or it may not be, sir,' replied the

stranger, lifting his hat. 'I came express with two companions, who remain at your house. The good lady thought it best to send me up here.—What a long ride it has been—awfully steep, and confounded footing' (wiping his hot forehead).—'Well, sir, which is Captain Gravenor?'

'Hillo, Gravenor!' shouted Sir Hugh. 'Come here; some one for you.'

Captain Gravenor instantly turned back, taking long strides over the heather, his fine figure a model of manly beauty, his fair face beaming with health and excitement. He came up to the new visitor, looking at him curiously—evidently not knowing him.

'Are you Captain Gravenor?' said the stranger, dismounting.

'Yes,' replied the Captain, surprised.

'You must come with me at once.'

'Come with you.—Why?'

The man led him apart from the others. 'Because I have come from Scotland Yard to arrest you,' he answered in an under-tone.

'Arrest me! What for?' cried the officer in amazement.

'For forgery.'

Captain Gravenor flushed crimson with indignation. 'How dare you!' he cried. 'I've a great mind to knock you down!'

'That would only make matters worse. You just come with me quiet, unless you want the others to know.'

'All the world may know!' exclaimed the Captain angrily. 'I never heard such a ridiculous charge in my life. Upon whom am I supposed to have forged, if you please?'

'Mr Desborough.'

Captain Gravenor laughed; his good spirits had not deserted him. 'This is really too good. It must be a practical joke.'

'You'll find it only truth.—Here is the warrant for your arrest. We've come from London on purpose; me, another officer, and Mr Parish, clerk from the Nicholas Lane Bank.'

'There is, then, some dreadful mistake.' He beckoned to the Baronet, who stood out of ear-shot, but who plainly understood that something was wrong. 'Sir Hugh,' said he, 'I must curtail my pleasant visit, and accompany this person back to London at once.' Then he related the accusation, in a bitter scornful tone.

Sir Hugh looked shocked and astonished. 'I will return to the house with you,' he exclaimed. 'Never fear, the matter will be cleared up. There is some rognery at the bottom of it. But it seems to me an unpardonable proceeding on the part of your father-in-law. He ought to have known you better.'

'He does not like me. Still, for Lena's sake'—He stopped, for the first time overcome.

'Let us return to the house quietly; there is no occasion to make such a scandal public,' said Sir Hugh, placing his hand kindly on the young man's shoulder. 'No one shall know it here. The matter will soon be cleared up. You will leave Mrs Gravenor with us until you come back to finish your visit.'

It was an easy matter to hoodwink Lena, although she could not clearly understand why three persons should be despatched to fetch her husband, when a telegram from her father would

have answered the purpose equally well. But she had been brought up in subjection, having lost her mother in her infancy, and took things meekly.

'Bless you, my dearest! We shall soon meet again,' said the Captain, embracing his wife.

But Lena wept. 'This is our first parting,' said she, 'and it seems cruel.'

'I shall be back again in a few days,' cried he.

Alas! sad unexpected events happen in the world. Captain Gravenor never returned. In spite of his solemn assertions of innocence, he was obliged to stand his trial for forgery. There was only circumstantial evidence, but that went against him. Many friends and brother-officers came forward to bear witness as to his honour. Their testimony went for nothing.

The sum was only for five hundred pounds; but he was known to be in straitened circumstances. His father-in-law would rather have lost the sum than had the affair made public. As it was, he was one of the last who had intimation, and it was too late for hushing it up.

The forgery had been detected by a Mr Thorel, a very important person at the bank, the nephew of the late Mrs Desborough, Swiss by birth, and head of the foreign department.

When Captain Gravenor heard who was his accuser, he was astounded, as well he might be. He declared the cheque for five hundred pounds had been handed to him by Thorel himself. This Thorel emphatically denied. Unless proof is brought to the contrary, one person's word is as good as another's.

The Captain stated that he and his wife were staying for a few days in Portland Place, before starting for Perthshire. They returned to the Wellington Barracks one evening after a dinner-party. Mr Thorel was also there. Having said adieu to Mr Desborough and others, he was following Lena down-stairs to the brougham, when Thorel stopped him on the landing at the first flight of stairs, where they were quite alone, and whispering, 'My uncle desired me to give you this cheque,' slipped it into his hand.

'Give Mr Desborough my most grateful thanks,' he had replied. On reaching home, he told Lena of her father's present, at which she was much pleased. He cashed it the following morning before starting for the north.

Mr Thorel emphatically denied having given the cheque to Captain Gravenor. He had certainly spoken a few words to him on the landing, but they merely referred to his intended journey of the morrow. No one had seen the transaction.

It was some days before Mr Desborough discovered that a leaf had been purloined from his cheque-book, which he kept in a drawer of his writing-table in the library. This led to investigation; and on Mr Thorel's examination of the cheque that Captain Gravenor had cashed, he at once pronounced it a forged one.

Captain Gravenor had sat reading in the library the day of the dinner-party. All went against him. Mr Desborough deposed that he had occasionally sent both his daughter and her husband cheques, but never to so large an amount. He had received a short letter from Gravenor when he arrived in Perthshire—he thanked him for his 'great kindness.' He was at

a loss to know what he meant, but set it down to the friendliness he had recently shown his son-in-law, with whom he had not been on the best of terms.

Captain Gravenor was pronounced guilty by most people; but all wondered at his shortsightedness, not to say clumsy management in the fraud, which he might be sure would be almost instantly found out. Doubtless, he calculated on the transaction being looked over, for his wife's sake, as it would have been, had not Mr Thorel made the affair public at once.

A money-lender named Issachar stated that he had recently received the last balance of an account owed by Captain Gravenor; and the testimony of this man in his client's favour was remarkable. He had transacted money matters with him for several years, even before the young officer attained his majority, and had always found him strictly honourable; in fact, he was one of the few persons in the world whom he would trust implicitly. He insisted upon handing back the two hundred pounds he had received from him, to the banker. 'I refuse to keep it,' said he; 'but I consider Captain Gravenor's debt paid just the same.'

The unfortunate Captain was found guilty of forgery, and sentenced to transportation.

To those who believed in him, the case was a mystery. As time went on, he was forgotten, his name being seldom mentioned even by those who had been his friends—by his wife, never.

#### AMONG AMERICAN MINERS.

YOU have seen, perhaps, a Durham coal-mine, and have noticed the grim aspect of Durham coal-heavers. Miniature mountains of slag and shale encompass the mouth of the pit. A filthy sooty-black liquid distils itself from the refuse heaps. The very sky looks black in the face, and Nature out of sympathy with the mummy-like beings who swing themselves into the darkness and upheave the bowels of the earth. You hear the clangour of titanic hammers, the faint ringing of countless anvils, and the deadened clanking of heavy chains. Tall chimneys shoot skywards and smoke lazily.

The above picture presented itself as a forcible contrast to our mind as we stood for the first time at the entrance of an American silver mine. Instead of a leaden-eyed miserable heaven, a few light clouds met and kissed each other. The scoria round the edge of the shaft looked as though, if water were poured upon it, it would hiss and smoke. A little wooden structure containing pit-tackle and machinery was thereabouts the only sign of mining life. A gaunt giant clad in blue overalls, a red flannel shirt, and a pair of hob-nailed cow-hide wellingtons, was the only above-ground representative of the creatures who, according to the imaginative journalist, earn such fabulous sums of money.

Equipped with a marvellous folding candlestick and a box of matches, my companion and I took our stand at the head of the shaft. There was no danger, as in a coal-mine, of being blown up by fire-damp or poisoned by choke-damp. 'Ready?' said the man at the wheel. 'Yes;' and down we dropped six hundred feet. That buried-alive sensation which asserts itself underground had

barely time to make itself felt before we were relieved by a gleam of warm colour which reached us through an aperture that hardly admitted of the passage of a human body. Here a rich vein of silver ore had been struck and followed. With the aid of pickaxes and a few beams for stooping, three or four men had worked their way from darkness to daylight—had tunneled through solid rock to the side of the hill, a distance of three hundred feet. The vein had yielded upwards of fifty thousand dollars. Yet to all appearance the ore was as wanting in value as common road stone: the most powerful microscope we had revealed not a vestige of precious metal. The assayer pronounced it to be twenty-five dollar ore; that is to say, ore of the value, in English money, of five pounds per ton. Truck-load after truck-load was despatched to the company's mill, where thirty iron stamps pounded it with a seemingly purposeless frenzy and savage exasperation, as if angered by its resistance. When in a state of pulverisation, this seemingly worthless powder was passed through a quicksilver bath. The silver amalgamated with its volatile companion, and the debris, under the name of 'tailings,' escaped down the gulch.

Farther on we came upon the miners. These were working singly and in groups. Some were descending, some ascending, others working laterally. 'They follow the seam, wherever it goes,' explained the superintendent. They were rough specimens of humanity, these men, who throughout the livelong day hammer by candlelight at solid rock. Very grim, pallid, and determined were their faces, and very wild and bright their eyes. Their task looked as unending and as hopeless as that of stone-rolling Sisyphus. Little trolleys, about twice the size of wheelbarrows, were running along all the principal levels. Into these the ore was shovelled, run to the mouth of the shaft and emptied into a truck, which, when full, was hauled up and shipped to the company's mill. From the minor levels the ore was carried in baskets to the trolleys, a work in some cases difficult and dangerous. The mill was situated at the base of the hill. To it a railway track had been laid down, so that a truck-load once started descended by its own volition.

Conversation with the miners was strictly prohibited, doubtless lest information so obtained should be used on the Stock Exchange or by the press. To gain admission was no easy matter. The public and the shareholders are, therefore, at the mercy of the superintendent and the directors. There is nothing to prevent false reports as to the state of the mine being circulated, or unfavourable telegrams being suppressed by interested directors. 'Hence many a man,' as Dickens well puts it, 'has locked up money in his strong-box, like the man in the *Arabian Nights*, and opening it, has found but withered leaves.' Superintendents will thrive and managing directors grow fat in connection with the worst of mines, as long as men will 'put up' money to work them.

The mining camp was a straggling assemblage of picturesque little houses, all built of wood. There were queer little shops kept by Chinamen; and quaint little huts fearfully and wonderfully made, in which ubiquitous Indians lived. Romance-destroying civilisation had even here begun to assert its power. A session of the Circuit Court

took place twice a year, and to it were submitted all disputes about mining claims, the most fruitful source of disagreement. Provisions were brought by a railroad which ten years since had not been conceived in the wild brain of Fancy herself. A new doctor had arrived and affixed a brass plate to his door. His rival had departed, taking with him a case of surgical instruments at which a city practitioner would smile. It consisted of two bowie knives—one ingeniously hacked and filed into a saw—a pair of pincers, and some buckskin cut into slips for ligatures. He could point to many a difficult operation successfully performed with these rude instruments; but he recognised the uselessness of opposing Science, who, with calm, assured tread, is everywhere driving unskilled labour from the field. Holloa-a-hole-in-the-air, an Indian chief, who a few years ago sought to ornament his wigwam with scalps, had been driven by a troublesome molar to visit the pale-face medicine-man. He submitted to its extraction with a 'Ugh!' of satisfaction, and now almost worships his benefactor from afar.

It is not well to question American miners as to their previous history. Some of them are perhaps fugitives from justice. 'Do as you would be done by, or take the consequences,' is their unwritten code, which it is not well to violate. They are free men, and so long as you are 'square' with them, will treat you with respect. 'Poker' is their besetting sin, and rye-whisky—which is sometimes termed 'railroad,' from the rapidity with which it hurries men to the end of their journey—their favourite stimulant. Champagne they know not, even by name. Successful gamblers and lucky owners of claims who have chanced to be gamblers have, it is true, indulged in unheard-of extravagances. Their eccentricities have been made universal by the imaginative journalist, until there are not a few who believe that miners ride to work and drink champagne by the gallon. As a matter of fact the American miner is another sort of creature. Like his English cousin, he has to fight tooth and nail for a living, and he has far fewer comforts. That short, thickset, beardless man, of cheerful and intelligent aspect, is the only man in the camp who ever owned money. He sold a mining claim for twenty thousand dollars (four thousand pounds). He 'ran' Mike's hotel for a week; for a week the whole camp ate, drank, and were merry at his expense; then this best-natured fellow in the world went to 'Frisco' to play for higher stakes than the camp afforded. That was his ideal of happiness. A fortnight later he turned up again 'cleaned out.' Fate had been 'agin' him. He was too much of a gambler to rail at Fortune. He returned to work as a common miner at three dollars per day.

An outcry having arisen against the Chinese, we were anxious to see how 'John' comported himself in a mining camp. We had thought that oil and water were scarcely less reconcilable to each other than was the Chinaman to the European or American: that he acted as a red rag to the Australian and American alike. His great crimes, or objectionable traits, seemed to be that he lived on nothing, undersold and under-worked white men, and carried his gains and even his bones to his own country. Whatever the Chinaman may be in a great city, as a servant he is intelligent, frugal, peace-loving, law-abiding,



and greatly valued by his employers. Chinese communities may be immoral and honeycombed with secret and treasonable societies; but the Chinese servant of many an American household is a treasure, a *sine quâ non*, doing with equal readiness and skill the labour of a man and the work of a housemaid. Female servants, it must not be forgotten, are not common in America, except in cities, and their duties are considered beneath the dignity of American citizens or emancipated negroes; hence the great demand for Chinese servants in outlying districts. Americans dislike to be pitted against coloured labour; but we do not believe the dog-in-the-manger policy of expulsion finds general favour among them. The mental architecture of the Chinaman is unique: he is not a sociable creature. He is stolid and excessively reticent. Only once do we remember to have seen a Chinaman animated or curious. My boots had been given to Chi Ling, the boy-of-all-work. The following morning he appeared at my door gesticulating wildly, with boots and boot-trees in his hands.

'What he for, sree?'—pointing to the trees.

'What he for?'

I endeavoured to explain.

'Me sabe, me sabe. Chi Ling no fool. You makee shoes.' And Chi Ling departed with the satisfied air of a man who has solved a mystery.

Mining camps are much smoother places than they used to be. The new and improved mode of travelling for a time threw things out of gear. For a while the fugitive from justice had things much his own way; he had but to reach a railway station unobserved. 'Thud, thud, puff, puff,' went a shrieking monster, and he was whisked past towns ten, twenty, thirty, a hundred miles away. Pursuit was physically impossible; and a mining camp was a common and secure city of refuge. Now, all that is changed. Click! click! goes the electric telegraph, and where is he? If he succeeds in embarking, whirr-r-r goes the Atlantic cable, and he is caught like a mouse in a trap. People who are 'wanted' cannot easily leave this country, even for their country's good. The speculations to which the flying machine gave birth in the mind of Addison are as nothing to the facts accomplished by steam and electricity. The world of to-day is a world of rapid motion and rushing railroads. The iron horse is a cruel destroyer of romance. Passengers used to feel a positive joy in getting home safe; now there is no such thing, for that is a matter of course. Crafty cheats of all descriptions have perhaps been multiplied, and now swarm in society 'as thick as the gay motes that people the sun-beam;' but long-lived systematic robbery by violence, even in America, is a thing of the past. You are much more likely to be the victim of little tricks such as Ah Sin played upon Bill Nye and Truthful James than to get a brace of bullets put through your head by that daring assassin Captain Cutthroat.

Miners are not what they were in the brave days of the Roaring Camp; they pay some attention to 'such minor details as ears, eyes, and fingers.' All stories of the sensational romancist now properly begin with, 'Once upon a time.' Dark deeds are not unknown in the West; but the 'properties' which would make them romantic are gone. The miner chooses to encase himself

in a crust of outward surliness; but under his rude exterior beats a heart of flesh and blood, a heart which under the alchemy of a kindly touch will blossom into kindest fruit and flower. Old Kentuck died claspings in his arms the child he endearingly called a 'little cuss.' And we may hope that the time is not far distant when the use of the revolver will have slipped into disrepute or desuetude, and when mining camps shall have lost the unenviable reputation that they have hitherto borne.

## EUNICE: A RUSTIC IDYL.

By the Author of 'The Way of Transgressors.'

THERE was a scent of flowering beans in the air, the vetches were in blossom, and the bees were toiling out their six weeks of existence among them as though life would never end. Eunice South stood at her own door and looked away towards the harvest-fields. The house faced west, and she raised her hand to shade the waning sun from her eyes. She was a heavily-built girl, with a colourless, plain face, a face that would have been uninteresting only that the eyes were beautiful and the mouth patient and sweet. Eunice's heart was craving for the open country and the breadths of undulating corn-land, craving perhaps most of all for a little companionship with the young and glad and gay.

Most girls of Eunice's class at Grimpat worked in the fields at harvest-time, and so earned the price of a new gown or a set of ribbons for Sundays; but old Joseph South would not hear of such a thing for his daughter. The manners of the fields were rough, and he had the ideas of people who have seen better days.

Eunice was a lonely creature, reputed proud because she was so shy and humble. What she had to be proud of the neighbours did not know, and so resented the quality they ascribed to her. That she was a good girl, industrious, dutiful, steady as old Time, they would have admitted; but these are not the attributes one looks for at twenty years of age.

There had been a time when the Souths were very well-to-do, when Joseph's shop was well stocked and his work very popular; but the curious kind of decay that sometimes creeps over little hamlets in a single generation had reached Grimpat, and Joseph South's prosperity perished with it.

Eunice was quite an adept in keeping up appearances, in making things do, in saving, and patching and darning; but show is not a sustaining thing when the larder is sometimes as bare as old Mother Hubbard's cupboard and there are three men to cater for. An exclusive diet of bread and tea does not sustain the courage or improve the temper. Old Joseph could stand it; but the boys grew weak and weedy on it; and young Joe, in a fit of rebellion, enlisted. The father said it was a good riddance; but they all had the feeling, universal in country districts,

that a son sent to the service of the country is a son thrown away.

Eunice was nineteen years of age before she had ever been five miles from Grimpat. Then a friend of hers got married at a distance, and having made a good thing of it, invited her old neighbours to appreciate her prosperity. In succession, Mrs Gregg's girl-friends were brought from Grimpat to sit in her best parlour and admire the hair-covered furniture and the large-patterned carpet, and to sleep in the close little best bedroom that overlooked the fowl-yard.

Eunice's delight when she was invited must be left to the imagination. Think of your brightest dream made actual, and then you will understand a little of the girl's emotions as she packed her small wardrobe into the old skin-covered trunk that had once held a portion of her mother's trousseau. There was no self-consciousness about Eunice; she never thought how her shabby clothing would strike Mrs Gregg, or what impression she would make at Tregby.

It was July weather, and the earth was pompously attired, the fields an emerald, the sky a sapphire, and the purple widths of heathland breaking here and there into a blaze of golden gorse. The girl scarcely seemed to breathe as she was swept through miles and miles of rural panorama. And then the wonders of the little town when she reached it: the station, that seemed to her so busy and so bustling; the noise of vehicles; the crowd of foot-passengers; and the magnificence of such shop windows as Eunice had never hitherto conceived! She was all eye and ear and parted lips, that now and then gave little gasps of astonishment.

Never had Mrs Gregg been so successful with a guest; never had she been offered so full a cup of honest admiration. She discoursed of the magnificence of Tregby, and her husband's position and importance there, all the evening; he, good man, interrupting her now and then with a deprecating 'Jane, Jane!'

Eunice slept little that night. Perhaps the unaccustomed luxury of Mrs Gregg's best feather-bed had something to do with it, or perhaps she was only resolving the enigma of how an opening could be found for Willie in this prosperous place. She and her father were fixtures at Grimpat; but Willie was young and had a right to opportunities.

Reticence is instinctive with shy people. It never occurred to Eunice to take either Mrs Gregg or her husband into her confidence, before she had evolved a distinct plan for herself.

Three days after Eunice's arrival, Mr Henry Watkins stood at the desk in his own shop making out a bill or two. Mr Watkins was the type of young tradesman that is not infrequent in provincial towns—a man who read a little, attended local debating societies, belonged to a cricket club, and wore proper cricketing flannels when he joined the local Eleven on Saturday evenings—a man who managed his business thoroughly, nevertheless, and was popular with his neighbours. He was rather a good-looking man, too, not quite thirty yet, with thick dark hair, and the keenest eyes Eunice had ever seen. Eunice passed and repassed the plate-glass window half-a-dozen times before she found courage to enter.

'I want to see the master,' she said, when she was observed.

'I am the master,' Henry answered with a little air that was perhaps natural.

Eunice blushed through her thick pale skin. She would have liked an older, more everyday master. 'I called to ask about work for my brother.' Her eyes were as bright and humid as those of a gazelle; except for that, she was rather ridiculous with her black cotton gloves, her jacket years behind the fashion even of Tregby, and her shabby battered old hat, with the rain-washed feather asserting itself rampantly in the crown.

'I don't know if you need a journeyman,' poor Eunice went on, feeling now on what a fool's errand she had come. 'I'm a friend of Mrs Gregg's; my father is a shoemaker at Grimpat; and my brother, who is nearly eighteen, knows the business. Grimpat is a small place; there is not much work there; and I thought, seeing Tregby so busy and so prosperous, that maybe there might be an opening.' She was pathetic in her crimson confusion, and Mr Watkins was a little moved by the eyes that had now ceased to look at him. He was not unaccustomed to young persons making excuses to call on him; but he felt that Eunice's errand was genuine.

'I had not thought of an extra hand,' he said slowly; 'but if I required one'—

'Thank you. It was a liberty to call, I know.'

'Not at all—not at all; and if you will leave the name and address, I will think the matter over.'

She gave the address, and then hastened out, her sense of guilt and folly going with her. Nothing had come of her enterprise, and therefore she told the Greggs nothing about it. People like Eunice, when they begin to have a secret, must continue to keep it, explanations become so laborious.

Two days later, Henry Watkins called at the Greggs'; but he did not enter the parlour, and he made no mention of Eunice; he only said that the Tregby Cricket Club had challenged the Overhill Club, and that he could get seats for any friends who cared to look on at the match.

Mrs Gregg would much rather this invitation had come in Eunice's absence, for, though she liked her, she thought her a perfect scarecrow, and did not care to identify herself in public with her; but the invitation was too good to be declined, and the best had to be made of the visitor. Mrs Gregg trimmed Eunice's old hat tidily herself, and lent her one of her own smart gowns; and when Eunice clambered into the trap that was to carry them to the cricket-field, there was not in England a happier creature. The world seemed beautiful to her, all made up of music and motion. The summer hum, composed of voices of winged things, the rustle of leaves, the sighing of the breeze in the tree-tops, was scarcely overborne by the soft footfalls of the pony on the padded dust of the high-road. At that moment Eunice realised the full joy of living. To drive like a lady, to have a seat in the enclosed space like a lady, to be well dressed, and surrounded by kind people—if there was a happier experience in life, Eunice did not know it. If the white figure in the distance, who was said to be Henry Watkins, and who was said to distinguish himself, was inextricably mingled

with the joy of the hour, the girl was quite unconscious of it.

But the best things come to an end. Eunice went home on Monday, and the narrow life at Grimpat, with its dullness and its restrictions, was resumed.

A whole month passed, and it was in that time that Eunice used to stand at the open door and look away towards the harvest-fields, desiring she knew not what. Henry Watkins had forgotten what she asked of him; but indeed what right had she to expect he would remember, or to proffer her absurd request?

Johnnie Tallet was the postman at Grimpat, a youth who wore no uniform and had no dignity to keep up, dignity not being expected for the pittance he received. As he came up the street, carrying the three letters that constituted the mail for the entire village that day, he caught sight of Eunice by the window, and tossed the letter addressed to her into her lap through the open sash, saying: 'From your sweetheart, Eunice.'

Eunice looked up and nodded. She had letters now and then from Mrs Gregg and others. But this was a different letter—very brief, written in a large, black School-board hand:

DEAR MISS SOUTH—I expect to be in your neighbourhood on Wednesday, and shall call to see your brother, and to settle the matter about which you spoke to me, should he prove suitable.—Very truly yours, HENRY WATKINS.

The beating of Eunice's heart almost suffocated her. She thought it was joy for Willie, and dreaded lest he should undervalue the opening offered him. She had not spoken on the subject to any one, perhaps from the thought that premature talk is unlucky—perhaps from some other motive; but she told Willie now, and was provoked that he treated the matter as an every-day occurrence.

When Joseph heard the news, he seemed displeased—said he did not want to lose all his children—that there was work for the boy at home; and that Eunice, like all her sex, was too prone to meddle. But when he saw Mr Watkins, he was mollified. Prosperity and youth and clear-headedness and self-confidence are elements in a pleasing whole. The old man talked more frankly to this stranger than he had done to any one for years, boasted a little of his own ability and past success, and blamed bad luck that his prosperity was over.

Willie was engaged, of course, at a fair salary, to be increased by results, and was to go to Tregby the following week.

Things seemed better after Willie went away. He wrote home cheerfully. He was glad of the change; and then there was more work left for old Joseph, and one less to clothe and feed, which was a consideration.

But a fresh trouble was in store. The Souths seemed doomed to trouble. Joe had tired of the army; the discipline nagged him; he saw no meaning in it, he said; and his pay never seemed to reach him for fines. If he could be bought off, he would pay the money back when he earned it; and he hoped his father would do this for him. But old Joseph had nothing saved, not

even the few pounds necessary; and if he had, he would probably not have given it. When people took the law into their own hands, as Joe had done in enlisting, they had to abide the consequences, he said. When Joe received this answer, he took the law into his own hands again, and deserted.

Oh, the horror of that night to Eunice, when he entered dusty and footsore and fell on the food that was offered him like a wolf! The wrath of old Joseph, and the sullen defiance of the culprit. Return! Not likely. He had suffered enough before he ran away. It was for them to decide whether they would help him out of the country or give him up. For his part, he did not care much which they did.

Now, neither Eunice nor Joseph understood what penalties befell a deserter, and Joe took good care not to enlighten them. They knew that military law was inexorable, had no pity, and made no excuses, and they had heard of deserters being shot. That Joe would receive severest punishment, whatever that might be, they knew; and many a night they lay awake picturing him with bandaged eyes in front of a platoon of soldiers. They kept him hidden till they managed—Heaven knew with what dire difficulty—to scrape together the few pounds necessary for his escape, and then they got him out of the country. When he had gone, they buried at dead of night the uniform he had worn when he came home, feeling, poor souls, like murderers as they did so.

Under her troubles, Eunice grew colder, more reserved, prouder the neighbours said. She hardly ventured out of doors now, being afraid some one would look at or question her. There is a great deal of that timidity among villagers, which makes them hate to go abroad unless they can go in company or on an errand. Eunice loved the open air, the bird-voices, the shifting clouds, and all other rural sights and sounds; but she lived preferably within four dull poor walls, because she was unhappy and afraid.

That visit to Tregby rose up before her now and then like a dream. Surely she only fancied she had had such happy days.

There were times when the girl felt quite old and settled in the groove in which old maids live. Other girls, her seniors by many years, had their lovers, their friends, their frolics; but such things did not come Eunice's way, and likely never would. Perhaps it was her own fault. There was no one at Grimpat, Eunice would have cared to be on intimate terms with. Perhaps she had her ideal; but it was an ideal so remote, so consciously beyond her, that when Willie wrote home, 'The master is getting the house done up; he told me yesterday he is minded to marry before the year is out,' the curious heart-pang she suffered felt only like a deeper depression. It was not likely that she had ever thought of Willie's employer in connection with herself; no one could have contemplated Eunice with more contempt than did Eunice herself at this thought. A man like that! Of course, he would marry some one like himself.

Eunice took it into her head that they should have a hot supper that night; even if Joe's debt weighed on them, there was no reason why they

should starve. She did not understand the restless motive that prompted her to do something unusual, to put a good face even before herself, in that curious sick depression which clung to her. When you can make a feast for yourself, you seem to rejoice that other people prosper and that other girls have lovers.

Eunice put on her old hat, and took the little basket with a lid in her hand. She was going to commit an extravagance—to buy some of Mrs Mallet's famous big eggs, and a bit of bacon at the village shop. There were times when Eunice felt that her blood was thin, and grew hungry for a taste of meat. But once she was out in the sunshine, she forgot her errand and her longing for luxurious living, for the wide landscape was all around her, the irregular fields undulating away to the hills. The air was strong and pure, and fragrant with the breath of flowers. At her feet the myosotis and harebells bent their delicate heads in the breeze that crept out of the distance. Eunice sat down on the fence, the basket in her lap, her eyes misty and faraway. It was good to be out here alone, under the shifting clouds, with the sense of silence and vastness and God around her. She did not put this into words; she only felt that her troubles seemed trivial under the remote sky, and she resolved that in the future she would invent errands oftener. And then she stopped thinking, for a man was coming with long swinging strides over the narrow path through the grass. He was not a Grimpat man—no Grimpat man ever walked or dressed like that. She sat gazing at him with the unabashed curiosity of a fearless wild creature, and then she rose with a sudden husky cry. What bad news did he bring?

'Willie,' she said breathlessly—'Willie?' The little basket rolled away from her lap and ignominiously buried its mouth in the grass.

'Willie is well,' Henry Watkins answered. 'Did I frighten you?'

She stood staring at him, plucking a little at her dress, as though something suffocated her.

'There is no bad news?'

'None in the world.'

'Then what brought you?'

The young man laughed. 'I can't say you are very hospitable. I came for a trip to Grimpat, as I did once before. I am taking a holiday.'

'And you were coming to see us?'

'Straight.'

Eunice bethought herself of the supper, which was doubly necessary now. She still felt in every limb the shock of his unexpected appearance; but she had no intention of letting him know that. Of course it was owing to her secret about Joe that she was so easily startled.

'I have an errand to do. But father is at home. If you will go straight on, I shall be back by-and-by.'

'Might I not do the errand with you?'

'Are you not too tired?'

'Not tired at all.'

He was in excellent spirits; but that was only natural, when she came to think of it.

'Are you pleased with Willie?' she asked after a pause.

'Thoroughly pleased.'

'I was afraid when I saw you that perhaps he had got into mischief.'

'Not he—steadiest fellow I ever had. No. I came on my own account, to see this pretty bit of country again.'

'It is pretty. I was just thinking that when I saw you.'

'It is a prettier neighbourhood than Tregby.'

'Well, I don't know that.'

'You liked Tregby?'

'Yes.' She could not say any more, the slow colour rose in her face at the bare recollection.

'I came to ask you—to tell you'—He stopped, stammering; and she came to the rescue kindly.

'Yes; Willie told me. I suppose you mean what he wrote about?'

'What?'

'That you are going to be married.'

'It all depends on the girl. I have not asked her yet. I don't know that she'll have me when I do.'

'I don't think there's much fear that she won't,' said Eunice, out of the heart of her conviction and innocence.

'I don't know. I'm not good enough for her—not half good enough.'

'I suppose she is very nice,' said poor plain Eunice, with a little sigh.

'She is; and as good as gold. How can I praise her more, Eunice, than to say it's you?'

'Me?'

'Yes; it's you.—Why, I've loved you since the first minute I saw you, looking at me with your big, beautiful, good brown eyes!'

Nobody ever knew what he had discovered in her, she least of all; but that piece of ignorance on the part of a wife is very conducive to a happy household. To this day the Grimpat people have not recovered from the shock of Eunice's grand marriage; and when they discuss the matter, solemnly assure all listeners that it must be a very lucky thing to be poor and proud and plain.

#### R O N D E L.

'Love heeds not Time!'

'Love heeds not Time!' the foolish Rose breathed low,  
When, ere her season, she began to blow,  
Wooed by the amorous breezes of the Spring,  
Beguiled by the fair look of everything;  
The gold-bell'd Crocus mocked with echoing chime:

'Love heeds not Time!'

Ah, eager Rose! far better 'twere to wait,  
E'en though the Summer make her coming late.  
'Tis true the first kiss of the sun you get,  
The pearl-drops of dew your petals wet,  
But soon that dew shall weep congealed with rime:  
Love heeds not Time!

There is no pity for her, no redress;  
The cruel frost wrecks all that loveliness;  
So, sun-forsaken and betrayed, she dies  
With crystal sorrow frozen in her eyes;  
Yet, faithful, sighs with her last breath sublime:

'Love heeds not Time!'

CONSTANCE FINCH.

Printed and Published by W. & R. CHAMBERS, Limited,  
47 Paternoster Row, LONDON; and EDINBURGH.